HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

VOL. V No. 11 Nov. 1984

In this issue:

November "election edition" of the FLAME;

"Our Ancient Legacy: Black History Quiz";

Books and other educational products for American-born African children;

Regular features.

OUTSIDE OF THEIR PICTURE

We didn't have to wait into the wee hours of the morning to find out who had won the presidential election. And it was, as the t.v. commentators so redundantly said, a virtual "sweep." Four more years of Reagan on one side and a thoroughly creamed Mondale on the other.

While about 90% of us reliable and loyal African folks dutifully voted for The Mannequin, more than 60% of Caucasians cast their ballots for The Fossil. It wound up, for us, just like the Democratic Convention. We came up empty-handed. We woke up on the morning of the 7th. with the throbbing hangover of having been tricked again.

The Reagan Mystique was successful because it effective in creating, for the majority of the U.S. population, a picture of an America void of problems--a white, god-fearing, hard-working, prosperous America.

Of course, in such a picture of the United States, there can be no African folks, no Chicanos, no Native Americans because too many of us are unemployed and otherwise hurting. That would spoil the picture. And when one has an electric toaster to protect, a home computer, a closet full of cabbage-patch dolls, etc.; when one has all these things to protect, he or she is not going to be terribly concerned about those many of us who, by no stretch of the imagination, can be seen in Reagan's fantasy America.

There were the voices of those crying out in the desert who suggested to us that we not waste our votes on the feeble non-alternative to Reagan--the blurry Mondale. But our heads were turned away from the idea of acting in our own interests(for once!) by the Uncle Andy's, Aunt Coretta's, and others of our "leaders" who can't break themselves loose from the chains of the slave mentality. So we went out in droves, generally ignoring the candidacies of Africans Mel Mason and Dennis Serrette and disregarding the option of writing in the names of other African folks. We did not want to be left out of the picture. What we failed to understand is that we never were in the picture/agenda of the political establishment--Democrat or Republican. So now, we are both out of the picture and out in the cold.

The special "election edition" of the FLAME is part of this edition because the essays and comments should serve as food for thought, particularly in light of the election results. The "election edition" was distributed in Omaha and Lincoln prior to the election. --Editor

Note: The answers to the "Black History Quiz" will be in the Dec. FLAME.

OUR ANCIENT LEGACY
BLACK HISTORY QUIZ

(Or The Every Month's Black History Month Quiz)

In Honor of the Great Spirit of Marcus Mosiah Garvey
(August 17, 1887—June 10, 1940)

1. The great organization founded by Marcus Garvey comprised of millions of Africans from across the world was popularly known as the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association). What was the full name of the organization?
2. For what tremendous accomplishment was the illustrious Marcus Garvey most noted?
3. The reading of what book authored by a former slave caused Garvey to formulate plans to build his own organization for African-descended people?
4. What did Marcus Garvey have in common with Phillis Wheatley, the first published Black Woman poet in the U.S.?
5. What great African leader had been a Garveyite and lived in a house rented by Garvey while a student in London?
6. What Caribbean country had more UNIA branches than any other country in the world (besides the U.S.)?
7. In what Central American country is the UNIA still an important organization?
8. What role did Haiti play in the UNIA?
9. What is Garvey noted for founding in Jamaica besides the UNIA?
10. What African-oriented religious group was founded by Garveyites and derived inspiration from his life and principles?
11. What famed member of this group, a prophet in his own right, was also born in St. Anns Bay, Jamaica. the birthplace of Garvey?
12. What great contribution is Garvey noted to have made to the education of African descendants?
13. What great African-American leader, founder of one of the most powerful African-American organizations, was a former Garveyite?
14. The first governor-general of independent Nigeria attested to being profoundly influenced by Garveyism. What was this African leader's name?
15. What African country had more UNIA branches than any other country on the African continent?
16. What great historian and secondly, what great founders of the largest Black library in the world were Garveyites and journalists for the UNIA newspaper, *The Negro World*?
17. What great Black woman figured prominently as a leader in the UNIA?
18. What brilliant and beloved African leader (West Africa) attended UNIA meetings, in Harlem, was greatly influenced by Garveyism as attested to in his biography, and named his country's shipping company line after Garvey's Black Star Line Steamship Company?
19. What great Oriental leader and militarist was also a Garvey admirer and also attended UNIA meetings while visiting the U.S.?
20. What was the name of Marcus Garvey's second wife of many years, and for what accomplishments was this great woman also known?
21. What great African-American leader and courageous martyr of the 60's was the son of a Garveyite who was also a leader and martyr for Black people's freedom?
22. What great honor does the Spirit of Garvey now hold in his native Jamaica?
23. What great African-American woman, revered as the oldest living revolutionary and the only known Black American woman to be crowned Queen Mother of an African tribe (the Ashantis), is a Garveyite and sat at Garvey's table as an honored guest during the launching of the UNIA's Black Star Line Steamship Company?
24. The UNIA owned a number of factories and businesses in which our people were employed. What product did one of these factories make that is still precious to the hearts of little Black girls?
25. What great contribution to Black religion did churchmen in the UNIA make?
26. For what great rallying cry to Africa's descendants is the honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey most remembered?

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MATTHEW

25:35-46 A Paraphrase

I was hungry and you made speeches
about increasing the allotment of food stamps.
What I needed was
food NOW.

I was thirsty and you got up a perition for
stricter water pollution standards.
What I needed was
a drink of water NOW.

I was a stranger and you surveyed the local merchants
about starting a Welcome Wagon service.
What I needed was
a friend NOW.

I was naked and you called people together to talk
about organizing a clothing drive.
What I needed were
clothes NOW.

I was ill and you organized a community committee
to study the possibility
of getting a public health nurse.
What I needed was
medicine NOW.

I was in prison and you wrote to the Department
of Justice about prison reform.
What I needed was
someone to talk to
NOW.

--Submitted by Robert Williams (Death Row, Nebraska State Prison). Author unknown.

The Harambee FLAME welcomes submissions of news articles, essays, poetry, important announcements, etc. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your submission.

In the December edition of the FLAME, we will be addressing the issue of the celebration of Christmas by American-born Africans and related issues. If you would like to contribute to this discussion, get your submission to us by November 25th.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization will be holding its Kwanzaa celebration this year on the 27th. of December. Get in touch with us if you're interested in attending. --Editor

HARAMBEE FLAME

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VOL. V No. 11 Special Edition Nov. 1984

THE ELECTIONS!

This edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME is primarily devoted to the question of what we African folks in the U.S. can and/or should do in order to gain the most from the upcoming elections. The following brief essays focus, for the most part, on the presidential race.

Matthew Stelly: "If Black people want to be independent and free, there seems to me to be but one solution: to not vote for any presidential candidate until we get a personal guarantee that a mechanism will be put in place that will enable us to practice the same kind of freedom and independence so many others now enjoy.

"If we vote Democratic, we will be voting for the alleged 'party of the people.' But what has this party done for us except to exploit our vote at every opportunity? We have been duped into believing that this party cares about Black people, when a simple look at the history and political science books reveals that this is not the case.

"We might vote Republican, which is supposed to be the money party. And since we have no money, it should not take a genius to see where the real interests of this particular sect lie. Black people are not considered in terms of what we can contribute--but what we can be USED FOR. And once the votes have been cast, the Republicans--like the Democrats --will forget all about the hours that Blacks put in working on their respective campaigns.

"Then there is the 'independent option.' But really, it's not an option at all. It is an ILLUSION that an option exists. Any system that wants to survive puts forward an illusion that there is an ALTERNATIVE. But the Independent Party talks only of changing the system. But

Alonzo Smith: "The real issues which concern people of African ancestry in the U.S.A. are are not truly being discussed by the major political figures. The continued existence of racism and poverty at home and the murderous suppression of our Brothers and Sisters in South Africa are simply ignored by Reagan and Mondale.

"The Democratic Party leadership would like to see Jesse Jackson just go away, but they know this isn't going to happen. You can expect that, after the election, they will try to keep the Party rules as tight as possible to minimize Black participation. You can also expect Jesse to fight those rules as hard as he can.

"Meanwhile, the Rainbow Coalition is building a network throughout the country. We are registering voters, keeping Black people's interests in the political system alive, and educating people on progressive issues. We are strengthening the Black community by building a multi-racial, broad-based coalition which is ready to support Black concerns.

"The Nebraska Rainbow Coalition has not taken a position or endorsed a presidential candidate. While most of us support Mondale/Ferraro, some of us are supporting for one of the two Black presidential candidates on the Nebraska ballot--Dennis Serrette and Mel Mason."

Stelly(cont.): when we talk about black people, the same Independents want us to occupy the same positions--usually found at the bottom of the ladder.

"Even with a black person in such a position, the end result is the same because there are no discussions of freedom or being independent. There is talk of working to change the system; there is talk of getting into the system and trying to change it from within. Both of these are based on misconceptions. What the Independent movement will do--and is doing--is to create a situation where it can have some input on how many Democratic or Republican votes it can control. They rally the 'leftovers' and then seek to sell those votes to the traditional candidate who needs them the most.

"My outline, then, is that Black people begin concentrating on registering to vote, because juries are made up of registered voters, and we need to be on juries so we can see to it that the judicial system meets out fair decisions. Secondly, we need to be about concentrating our political energies on controlling local elections and working to bring district elections into fruition in those cities around the country where blacks are concentrated. Then, we need to spend the next four years searching for someone who will represent our needs, and this is a crucial point..."

Editor: "This past August, the Caucasian minority in Azania(South Africa) approved a new constitution which, for the first time, would grant the voting franchise to people in that country of Asian descent and to those of mixed ancestry('coloureds'). In the election for parliamentary seats which followed, 83% of the eligible Asian and 'Coloured' voters stayed away from the polls.

This organized boycott of the election successfully functioned to deny legitimacy and credibility to a political 'reform' which excludes the African majority in Azania from the system of electoral politics. This boycott sent a message, not only to the South African government, but to the world that the vast majority of Asians and 'Coloureds' in Azania were not willing to cooperate, in a political sense, in the continued subjugation of the Azanian people.

What is the connection between the above and the '84 elections in the U.S.? The connection is this: that the right to vote includes the right not to vote. Over the past several months, those individuals and groups which have been working to increase voter-registration among this country's African population have been reminding us of the fact that our foreparents suffered, sacrificed and died to secure for us the right to vote. It has been suggested that, for us not to vote, is for us to betray our foreparents.

But the fact is that neither The Fossil (Reagan) nor The Mannequin(Mondale), as the televised debates, the candidates' respective parties' platforms, etc. have made so abundantly clear, has anything of substance to offer African people in this country in particular and this nation's poor in general. Neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party has set before us any specific plans by which the issue of un- and under-employment among African people might be resolved. Neither party has been willing to take a strong and principled(if at all) stand against the racist South Africa regime. Neither party has taken a position in support of cutting a bloated military defense budget and moving some of that money into needed domestic programs. Neither party has taken a stand against U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of poor and generally non-European nations.

While it may be advantageous for us to participate in local, state, and congressional races, we would certainly be wasting our votes by casting ballots for the presidential candidates of the Democrat and Republican parties. Our foreparents did not suffer and die for

Editor(cont.): us to be voting just for the fun of it. If we vote, it should be because we have reason to expect that we will collectively derive benefits of a meaningful sort.

On this upcoming election day, we should go to the polls and vote on local and state issues and candidates and be informed about whatever or whomever we cast our votes for or against. With respect to the presidential election, on the other hand, we should either not vote or cast our ballots for Mel Mason or Dennis Serrette(both, African candidates running independent of the major parties). We should exercise either of these two options, or a third (writing in the name of some African person), for the following reasons: 1-to send the Democratic Party a clear message that the days are past when it can expect our support and give nothing of substance in return; 2-to give the American political status quo notice that we have finally reached a level of maturity to know that the Democrats and Republicans do not offer a real choice to ourselves and to the poor of this country and the world; 3-to get ourselves used to the idea of doing something together as a people and putting our collective interests ahead of the interests of the nation's power-brokers; 4-and to begin the process of building a political party/movement of, by, and for our collective interests.

Whatever we do, every effort should be made to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, is and is seen as a unified action. Whatever we do, it should be done in large numbers so that the message we give has an impact."

CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Stelly is the director of the Malone Community Center in Lincoln. His essay is comprised of excerpts taken, with his permission, from parts I and II of an article of his which was run in the October 18 and October 25 editions of the OMAHA STAR.

Alonzo Smith is a member of the Black Studies Dept. at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the chairman of the Omaha, Nebraska chapter of the Rainbow Coalition.

These articles were solicited from the two Brothers, as well as from a couple other folks, in order to give our readership some important questions to consider prior to the upcoming elections. At a time when members of the African "leadership" in the U.S. reject Jesse Jackson in favor of a Walter Mondale and when a Rosie Greer(a born-again "Christian") makes of himself a mouthpiece for Reagan and right-wing Republicanism, it is evident that we are in dire need of some important questions to consider.

We thank Brother Matthew and Brother Alonzo for their cooperation.

THE FLAME

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, based at the Nebraska State Prison in Lincoln, Nebraska. Our newsletter exists both to inform and to provoke thought on issues about and of concern to African people wherever we may be. We welcome your contributions of information and/or ideas. We also urge you to subscribe to the FLAME--$6 per one year/12 issues.

We also urge you to get involved with the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. We meet here each Tuesday, at the alternating times of 3 and 6 p.m. To find out more information about the organization, write:

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE. 68502-0500

To subscribe, make money order payable to the organization. Send contributions of articles, poetry, etc. to the editor in care of the above address.

Editor/Wopashitwe Mondo Byen we Langa

From other sources

POLITICS "The crises we face as black people are the crises of the entire society. They go deep to the very bones and marrow, to the essential nature of America's economic, political and cultural ystems. They are the natural end-product of a society built on the twin foundations of white racism and white capitalism...

"A Black Political Convention, indeed all truly black politics, must begin from this truth: The American system does not work for the masses of our people, and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change(indeed, this system does not really work in favor of the humanity of anyone in America)...

Both parties(Democrat & Republican) have betrayed us whenever their interests conflicted with ours(which has been most of the time), and whenever our forces were unorganized and dependent, quiescent and compliant...by now we must know that the American political system, like all other white institutions in America, was designed to operate for the benefit of the white race ..."

--excerpted from the 1972 Gary Declaration, drafted at the Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana

"We may continue to reach for a 'piece of the action,' seeking to fit ourselves into America's structures as we know them, making ourselves 'marketable commodities,' raising no fundamental questions about the structures which have absorbed us. Of course, for many of us, this path can be nothing more than a cynical acceptance of an eternal tokenism, for by now it should be clear that the vast majority of our people can never participate in 'the action' of a society that is willing to accept up to 50 percent unemployment among our youth, that is willing to allow vast sectors of Black America nothing more than a future of welfare, warfare, or prisons. This choice also means acceptance of the fact that the American economic and political action is intrinsically tied to the exploitation of critical sectors of the nonwhite world, and to the support of repressive antirevolutionary governments. It is, as well, bound to a brutal exploitation of the earth's environment itself. Ultimately, then, this position is self-destructive, for such political and economic structures --such 'action'--have no healthy future."

--Vincent Harding, from his THE OTHER AMERICAN REVOLUTION, published in 1980

"There is something essentially absurd about a Negro politician in racist/capitalist America. The political apparatus was designed originally to exclude him/her. The rhetoric of the system is democratic, almost egalitarian; the practices are bluntly discriminatory. Any state cannot exist in and of itself; it rests upon the material base of a particular productive process, and in the last analysis, acts decisively to protect the propertied and powerful classes of that society. The Black majority has no real structural power, other than the productive capacity of its own hands. The Black elite retain the illusion of power, but are invested with little authority in its own right. The Black politician is locked in a world of meangingless symbols which perpetuate the hegemony of the white ruling class but that are not in themselves sufficient to maintain legitimacy. The Black elected official is essentially a vicar for higher authority, a necessary buffer between the Black majority and the capitalist state, a kind of modern voo-doo priest, smelling of incense, pomp and pedigree, who promises much but delivers nothing."

--taken from HOW CAPITALISM UNDERDEVELOPED BLACK AMERICA, published in 1983

The above presented to give us a few things to think about

--Editor